

A Seasonable
DEFENCE
OF
Preaching:
AND THE
Plain Way of it.



LONDON:

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DIALOGUE.

A. **M**Y Friends, you are well met here; I suppose your business now is walking; and I am for a turn or two with you.

B. You may well guess so; for you seldom meet us here, in the Church, upon any other occasion.

A. I wish you had spoken that *Penitently*; So I am sure you ought to have done. And if you had come a little sooner, you had learnt that duty from a very good Sermon.

B. A

B. A Sermon! 'Twas never well with the world since we have had so much *Preaching*.

A. To the same purpose said the Idolatrous *Jews* to the Prophet *Jeremiah*, that since they had *left to burn Incense to the Queen of Heaven*, they had *wanted all things*, and had *never seen good days*. All times have afforded matter enough of complaint, and I must confess there hath been a sort of *Preaching* that hath greatly contributed to the evils of ours: but in this place, and such like, there is, I hope, no danger of hearing any of those pestilential Doctrines, that once poysoned the publick Air. I am sure the true Primitive Christianity teacheth things
that

concerning **Preaching.** 3

that would cure all our maladies were they duly heeded, and put in practice: I need not tell you how earnestly it every where presseth *Humility* and *Modesty*, *Patience* and *Self-denyal*, *Charity* and *Peace*, *Mortification* to the world, and *Conscientious submission* to Governours. These our Ministers preach, and I suppose you will not say, that *such* Preaching promotes the evils of the times; if it do, 'tis very accidentally, and so, as the Grace of God is turn'd into lasciviousness, and the strivings of his Spirit may contribute to mens greater hardness.

B. I speak not against Preaching; but we have too much on't.

A. We

A. We have more reason to *thank* God for the plenty, than to *quarrel* at the abundance. It would be very humorsome and foolish to complain that the Rivers run with more water than is necessary for our occasions; and 'twould have been absurd perverseness in the *Israelites* to have murmured, because more Manna fell than they could use.

B. Do you not think then that there may be over-doing in this?

A. Yes doubtless; when all religious offices are run into Preaching; when *that* excludes the publick Prayers, and Catechising; when private Preaching days are set apart without

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concerning **P**reaching. 5

Authority, to humor the wantonness of vain people; all these are over-doing.

B. But is not constant Preaching twice every Sunday, besides occasional weekly Sermons, too much?

A. It may be too much for the strength and health of the Minister; it may be too much, where the people will not frequent those afternoon Sermons, or are prejudiced against them; it may be so in Country Parishes, and where no remarkable inconvenience ariseth from the omission of them: But in Cities and great Towns, (as the times are) they are in a manner necessary; since without them, people would idle more about,

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and

and more would run to the Conventicles; and 'twould occasion the reproach of laziness, on our Ministers, and turn divers off from the Church, that are kept in tolerable order by this double diligence.

There is not just so much Preaching set and stated by the Laws of Christ, and the Church, as must not be exceeded; but so much is due as Edification, Peace and Order require; now this is more or less, according as circumstances of times are; and ours are such as make it very behooveful for Ministers to abound in this work; what is grievous in it is to *them*, who have much more labour imposed on them than former times

concerning **Preaching.** 7

times expected, and in stead of being advanced in proportionable maintenance, and encouragement, *that* is saln as much (or more) than their work is increast. So that 'tis indeed very hard upon *them*, but *wee*, the people, have no reason to complain.

B. But Preaching being so frequent and common, becomes contemptible by it; and is so much the less heeded.

A. This is too true: and 'tis a great evil and discouragement to those that labour in the Word and Doctrine: but what help for it? To restrain and put a stop to the course of Preaching to cure this abuse, would in likelihood be followed with a

train of greater Evils; and as circumstances are, it could not be done, without manifest danger to the great Interests both of Church and State. If the regular Clergy should leave frequent Preaching, the Conventicle-meetings would swallow all: and therefore, upon the whole, whatever is to be thought of the thing it self, nakedly, and abstractedly considered, it is not, I think, any matter of just complaint, that there is so much Preaching: where the fault is not in the quality, the plenty is no grievance.

C. For my part I must confess I seldom hear Sermons, I love the Prayers of the Church,
and

concerning **Preaching.** 9

and I care not much for Preaching.

A. It is a great unhappiness to mankind, that we are so apt to run from one extreme into another : In the late times (and still among some) Preaching and Hearing were in a manner all the Religion : and the Prayers of the Church despised, and excluded ; and now, some on the quite contrary, pretend to magnifie the publick prayers, but vilifie Preaching ; and make Hearing nothing. So that one duty and part of Religion is set up to conflict and destroy another. And I observe, that usually people of this pretence, do in good earnest care for neither.

Preaching is an Evangelical Institution, and the Commission given the Apostles was, that they should go and teach all Nations: and Saint Paul saith, 'twas necessary for him to Preach the Gospel, and woe to him if he did it not; and that he was not sent to Baptise but to Preach. 1 Cor. 1. 17. viz. not to do the former chiefly. Faith comes by hearing; and how shall they hear without a Preacher? This was the way whereby God conveyed his mind unto men in all times. Noah was a Preacher of Righteousness; and God spake unto them of old, by the preaching of the Prophets. I need not Preach more on this plain and well known Subject.

C. But

C. But *ours* I suppose is not like the *Apostolical* and *Prophetical* Preaching.

A. It is not indeed like theirs in respect of the *immediate* inspiration which the Prophets and Apostles had, but our Ministers have not. It is not like in respect of the Authority of an *immediate* mission, assisted by the miracles they were inabled to perform; it is not like in respect of the persons Preacht to, who were chiefly Infidels; or the circumstances of the action, *without* the settled forms of decency, which now are used, but could not be then. But as to the *matter*, and the *ends*, which are the main things, our Preaching is as theirs was; our

F 4 Ministers.

Ministers Preach the same *Jesus* in the circumstances of his Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension, Mediation, and all the rest; the same doctrines, duties, encouragements, rewards and punishments: with the same design of persuading men in order to the glory of God, and the Salvation of their Souls, as the Apostles, and Primitive Preachers did.

C. All these were necessary to be Preach'd to men while they continued in *Judaism*, or *Heathenism*; but what need of them now, when they are believ'd and entertained in the world?

A. There is still need, and will be so to the worlds end. There are young that must be
initia-

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initiated, and adult that are to be confirmed; there are weak to be strengthened; and doubting to be resolved, and settled; there are Pious to be directed, and Wicked to be reprov'd; There are Hereticks and other Erroneous, and many who at the bottom are Infidels, that must be confuted, and withstood: These needs are and will be still, and Preaching is the ordinary means that God hath appointed in his Church to minister to such occasions, so that this was not a *temporary* ordinance to serve the first times only, but is of perpetual necessity and use. And therefore when our Saviour delivered the Commission to the Apostles to

teach all Nations, he gave it to them and their successors, and annexed a promise of his perpetual help, which continues still, and will always, viz. that he would be *with them to the end of the world.*

C. Well, well! I think I know as much as the Preacher can tell me; and therefore shall not trouble my self much with hearing Sermons.

A. No wise man will think you the more knowing for that opinion. You have read what one that knew a great deal said, *Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit, there is more hope of a fool than of him, Prov. 26. 12.* And another, *He that thinks he knows any thing, knows nothing yet as he ought*

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ought to know. 1 Cor. 8. 2. For even Apostles, and the greatest, confest that they knew *but in part*, and saw *through a glass darkly*. 1 Cor. 13. 9. And Solomon you know hath pronounc'd roundly against *opiniators*, saying, 'That 'tis the *fool that rageth, and is confident*, Prov. 14. 16. But if you did know so much, that you were not to be taught, yet since others do not, and Preaching is necessary for their wants, you ought to encourage their attendance by your example, though you had no other reason to hear Sermons: Yea, you would have need however to hear on your own score; For the design of Preaching is not to teach men new things; not
always

always to inform the understanding in matters before unknown; but sometimes it gives order and method to our thoughts, which perhaps were perplext, and so sets things in their right place, helping us to clearness of conception, which is a great advantage: It is design'd to bring known things to our minds, to render them present to our thoughts, to awaken consideration, and by that to excite the affections, and ingage the practice. It is not so much our want, that we do not know our duty, as that we are dead, and cold, and averse to practise what we are acquainted with; so that it is the business of Preaching to set before us the proper

proper motives, and considerations to move us to futable action. The grand cause of mens sins and neglects is *inconsideration*, and Preaching is a means to cure *that*. And let me ask you, whether you do not sometimes find your self much moved by what is said, and prest by another, when you had had the same things in your mind before, without effect?

C. I cannot deny that; but I see but little good that Preaching doth in the world: Men remain the same after all their hearing.

A. More good, many times, is done than appears; and I doubt not but it is so in the present case. There are seeds of
Piety

Piety and Vertue sown in the Soul, that shew themselves not a long while after, till time, further consideration and occasion bring them forth; many convictions lodged in the consciences of wicked men, that lie there like fire in a flint, till they are excited, and then they become means and instruments of repentance: many hints of truths taken without present emotion, that afterwards much influence the understanding and practice, some habitual fear of God, and love and esteem of religion, planted insensibly in the mind, that in their season work great effects; and I doubt not but by these, men that are very bad, are in
divers

concerning **Preaching.** 19

divers instances restrain'd and rendered less wicked than otherwise they would be. And though I have as deep a sence of the vileness of the world as most men have, yet I question not but that it would be very much worse were it not for Preaching; many there are who publicly own; and shew the benefit they receive from it, and 'tis fit the River should run on, though but few men, or beasts are refresh'd by it.

C. We have indeed read of great effects of Preaching heretofore, as of *Jonas* on the *Ninevites*, and *St. Peter's* on the three thousand converted at one Sermon; and *Orpheus* and others among the Heathens, have done
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strange things by the force of their Poetry and Eloquence; but now we see no such things; which is a plain indication that our Preaching is little worth.

A. 'Tis an ill measure to judge of the worth of things by their success. The instances you give are great, but as considerable Preachers as those have not succeeded, as they did. You know how it was with *Noah* in reference to the old world, to whom he preach'd many years without success on any, besides some of his own family: *Lot*, no doubt, exhorted and reprov'd the *Sodomites*, but to how little purpose? The Prophets were earnest and powerful in their Preaching, and

concerning **Preaching.** 21

and yet few believed their report, but the people continued still a stubborn and perverse generation. Our Saviour preached to many that would neither receive him, nor his doctrine, notwithstanding the divinity of his person, and the power of his miracles; And St. Paul, one of the most powerful of Preachers, after great pains with the *Thessalonians* seems to fear that he had labour'd in vain with them, 1 *Thes.* 3. 5. and after much instruction bestowed on the *Hebrews* he complains that though for the time, they ought to have been teachers, they had still need to be taught again which were the Principles of the Oracles of God. *Hebrews* 5. 12. So that the
want

want of success is not always justly chargeable on the Preaching. And *ours* certainly hath as great a subject, as great ends, as great motives, and as great helps as ever any, bating the *immediate* and *extraordinary*, had.

C. Therefore doubtless the defect is in the Preaching, and our Preachers have not the *way*, or ability to use those advantages.

A. Our Preachers are men, and have imperfections; and I confess there are divers sorts of Preaching that have no persuasive force in them: But yet many that have moved much, have been in their persons, knowledge, and other natural talents as indifferent, as generally our Divines are: and some of our
Preaching

concerning **Preaching.** 23

Preaching is as substantial, plain and forceable, both as to the matter, and manner of it, as perhaps any Age since the Apostles hath yielded; and yet such doth not prevail. There is therefore somewhat more in it than you imagin.

C. Pray what?

A. In order to your information in this matter, I intreat you to consider, that in all affairs, both of nature and morality, the seemingly greatest and fittest means, many times, produce nothing; when things mean, and to appearance, contemptible, work wonders. This might be exemplified in divers of the great changes of the world, and is to be seen daily
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in the variations that happen in the Spirits, and Actions of particular men. There are certain dispositions required in the Subject, in order to its being affected, or altered by the Agent: where those dispositions are, a small matter makes great impression; but where they are not, the greatest effects nothing: The most warm Sun, and seasonable showers cause no verdure on a rock; when a few kindly beams, and favourable drops make the grass shoot in the fruitful meads. There are analogous preparations and dispositions in the spirits of men, that arise from the concurrence of many circumstances, the conjunction of which

which is not observed: where such are as are proper to incline the subject, mean instruments work mightily, where they are wanting, the *same*, yea and those that in themselves are *more potent* and forcible, are fruitlessly employ'd. Now under the appearance of the same principles, inclinations, humors and appetites, there is a vast insensible diversity in these unheeded circumstances; so that one is powerfully moved by that which no way affects another; as we see in a trivial instance of one mans being inflamed by the passion of love by the sight of an agreeable beauty, that is nothing taking to another, equally amorous: and the smallest thing

thing kindles him that is so insensibly disposed, when all the charms of the same person are lost upon another. I give this instance, not out of lightness in so serious a matter, but because I cannot at present think of a better, that so plainly illustrates what I endeavour to represent.

C. This shews indeed how particular men may be sometimes moved by small things, when the same, and greater, make no impressions elsewhere. But how is it that multitudes are strongly affected together, as in the case of St. Peter's three thousand, and the sudden conversion of whole Nations?

A. The persons that were instruments

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struments in those wonderful conversions, were acted by an extraordinary Spirit, which gave them extraordinary assistance, and prepar'd the hearts of men for those wonderful changes; and it was not the bare natural force of their Preaching, and Eloquence, that was the cause of those mighty operations: So that these are not fair instances in our case.

C. But will you not grant that Preaching hath generally affected more in other of the ordinary Ages of the Church, than it doth in this?

A. I must grant it, and think that it scarce ever influenced the people less.

C. Well! and is not the cause
of

of the want of ordinary success, the meanness and defects of the present preaching.

A. You may gather from what I have been saying that I do not judge so. As in particular persons, so in publick bodies, and in whole Nations there may be a concurrence of favourable or cross circumstances that either dispose to, or hinder the effect and influence of Preaching. You remember that in the beginning of the late unhappy times, the Preaching of the *Puritan* Ministers (then so call'd) did great things, strangely prevailing upon the people; and there were no doubt considerable changes wrought upon many of their lives

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lives by it, at least, to reformation from open prophaneness, and irreligion; which we have no need to ascribe to their having greater matters to say than were said before, or since: But there was then a concurrence of many things that disposed the multitude to be so affected. They were much scared with the noise of *Superstition* and *Po-pery*, by those who pretended themselves to be the only Preachers, and defenders of the *pure*, and *Spiritual* religion: and people that are frightened are softened, and rendered very impressible: and then, the pretences of those men were very taking, it was all *light* and *mystery*, and *Spirituality* that they

G taught,

taught, set out by new conceits, and new phrases, by great earnestness and fervours of mighty zeal, which things especially when they are *new*, fill the imagination, and by that work exceedingly upon the affections of the vulgar. Besides which, the times were troubled, and discontented; men were angry with their Governours, and dissatisfied with the legal establishments (which then 'twas part of the *power* of *godliness* to oppose) And this begat the greater opinion of, and affection to those Preachers, and their Doctrines: Theirs were looked on as the only Soul-saving Sermons, and those conceits contributed mightily to the

the success of them : so that they could not choose but prevail upon warm, imaginative people, so prepared and disposed. But when the constitutions of the Church were destroyed, and those ways no longer met opposition, when the novelty of the notions and phrases was over, and the things began to grow stale, and accustomed to them, then you may remember, that those moving Preachers affected nothing so much as they had done before : Then we heard great complaints of the comparative infrequency of conversions, and the loss of that warm zeal that the people were acted by in the former season. Such were the

G 2 dispo-

dispositions that contributed to *their* popularity: But *our* Ministers are under the quite contrary disadvantages, so that 'tis a rare thing if any of them be very popular, though never so excellent Preachers.

C. Pray what are those disadvantages you speak of?

A. The generality of the people have their phancies prepossest with the notions, phrases, and ways of those other men, and so are prejudiced, or indisposed to that Preaching that would instruct them better. Many of them follow those Teachers into Conventicles, and several that do not, have an hankring after the Garlick and Onions; and others are cold
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and indifferent to such matters
one way, or other : The hurt
that the irregular leading men
did by their Preaching, hath be-
got in divers a dislike and dis-
esteem of the thing it self : and
for *their* sakes also the Persons of
our Ministers undergo disrespect
and contempt : Their practices
have begot in many an aver-
sion, or at least a disregard to the
Clergy, as *such*, not distinguish-
ing between the nocent and
the innocent : Atheists, Papists,
Phanaticks, the debauched
livers, and the covetous envi-
ers, make it their business to
slandor, vilifie, and expose
them. The preferments that
are good raise envy, the vast
number of mean and poor

Vicarages beget contempt, and both the one and the other, as ill will can take occasion, are applyed to the whole Order.

C. But do you not think the present Clergy have a great many faults that deserve the disrespect that is fallen on them.

A. So big a body of men cannot be without faults: but 'twould be too great a diversion from our present business to discourse what I have to say of that now, I may take another occasion to talk with you fully about it; I shall only note at present, that they suffer for others faults as much, or more, than for their own. Many of the old *Romish* Priesthood got great possessions by abusing the credu-

credulity of the people at their death; and the contrary humor prevails so much now, that scarce any thing is given by Will to Clergy or Church uses: even the little that is left is thought too much, and every one (almost) is nimming, and catching from them what he can. The Fanatical and Seditious Clergy Preacht us into Rebellion, and many are so set against the whole Order by it, that they cannot endure any of that gown, though most opposite to those principles and ways: Now the case being thus as to their faculty and persons, it cannot be expected that their labours should be very taking; and since there is such an un-

happy conjunction of so many other circumstances to dispose the people to the present Preaching, it is no wonder our Preachers have not that influence, and lead not the populace, as some others have done.

C. But the non-conforming Preachers do it still, though the Novelty you spoke of be over, which is a sign it was not that which occasioned their so great prevalency, and success.

A. Novelty was one of the concurring circumstances mentioned; that is gone indeed, but the others are revived, and new added, the fears of Popery, the opposition to establishments, the discontent, the glory of being

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ing thought more godly, the phancy of persecution, and such like, are as formerly : and there are over and above, the great excess of Atheism and Prophaness, that the scandals they have brought on Religion have occasioned ; and their pity towards their Teachers whom they look on as oppressed, by being displaced : These make them stick close, and to hear their Preachers with more affection, and zeal of attention, which affords them advantages for fame and applause. But for all this, though when they declaim against *Idolatry, Superstition, Will-worship, Formality*, the people sigh and take on, and seem to be much moved ; yet

let them but Preach heartily and home against malice, censoriousness, bitter zeal, lying, slandering, schism, disobedience to lawful Governours, spiritual pride, waywardness, fondness towards uncertain opinions, and such like sins of the parties; they will then find very cold entertainment of their doctrine, and move no passions by it, but rage and animosity against themselves; and the consequents, withdrawals from their meetings, and bitter revilings of their persons. So that indeed their Teachers how powerful soever esteem'd have not power to move them to any thing contrary to their humor, and the corrupt interest of their party: and therefore I never
heard

heard but of one man among them who durst venture to tell them plainly and honestly their own sins; and him, though otherwise the most considerable person that goes with them, they worry, and persecute with their bitterest reproaches and invectives.

D. For my part I think the way for our Ministers to bring the people back again to our Church, would be to out-preach those Teachers which you so much condemn.

A. But who shall be judge what sort of Ministers out-preach the other. The people so disposed and prepossest, as I have shewn ours generally are, will always judg on the side of
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the men that flatter them, and cant in their phrases, and stand in opposition to the Government; so that though our Ministers spake all like Angels, and all theirs brayed like Asses, those people would give the power and spirituality on *their* side. I suppose, you know the Apologue, the Nightingale and Cuckoo sung, the Ass was judge; The appeal was made, and the sentence was, That he could not deny but the Nightingale did well, but for a *plain Song* he was for the *Cuckoo*.

D. They will confess indeed that there is not so much Eloquence and fine language in their Sermons, but they are
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commended and followed for their *Plainness*.

A. Plainness is one of the best characters any Sermon, or other Discourse can have; and he is the Speaker that hath the *art* to be *plain*. But one of the greatest faults I find with those mens Sermons is, that they are not so. They generally state their doctrines confusedly, in words *metaphorical* and *ambiguous*; and direct to practice *mystically*, and obscurely in *phrases*, and odd schemes of speech, not understood, and scarce intelligible; as hath been sufficiently shewn in divers late Books. These the people having been used to, by them in the late times, though they understand no meaning

meaning in them, yet they take them to be plain; at least to be so to *spiritual* understandings, which they presume their own are. Another part of their Plainness consists in *homely similitudes*, and rude and blunt allusions, accommodated to the humor of the vulgar, who love such *familiar Preaching*, as they call it, which is indeed a debasing of Religion, and exposing what they deliver to the scorn of those of a better relish. Whereas our Ministers represent their doctrines and instructions in clearness of thought, and simplicity of speech, without nonsensical mysteries, and words without meaning. This I am sure is so in those that I hear, and

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I hope most other regular Ministers endeavour the same.

D. And yet I have heard people complain that they cannot understand those Ministers.

A. Some would say, they have been so much used to nonsense, that sense is a hard thing to them : Plainest things may seem difficult to those that are not accustomed to hear them. Our Ministers find it necessary sometimes to shew the reasonableness of the principles and duties of the Christian religion, for the assistance of those of more advanced understandings, against the pretences and assaults of Atheists and Infidels : and 'tis impossible so to express
all

all the matters that concern those great subjects, as that every vulgar head, that hath not been used to thinking, and deep reasoning, should presently take them. No, these though never so plainly discours'd will require manly, exercised minds, or they will not be receiv'd, or comprehended; and Ministers must divide the word to every one his portion, and not always speak to one sort. If there be any thing in this complaint, here I am sure is the ground, which the Preachers cannot help, except they could create understandings for their hearers: Otherwise they endeavour, profess and practise Plainness: and in those subjects too, as far as
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the nature of the thing will bear. Their ornament and all they pretend as language, is Plainness : and the great fault they accuse the others of is want of it : you may see in their books against them that they chiefly reprove, and expose those men for their affectation of mysterious nonsense, and words without knowledge, that is, for their not being intelligible, and plain.

D. Plain Preaching doubtless is best : and that it may be is the reason that the most *learned* men are not the best Preachers ; for they speak in a scholar-like way, and cannot descend to ordinary capacities.

A. I have indeed often heard
that

that spoken as a maxim, but though it hath some shew of truth, yet there is much mistake, if not malice against Learning in it. There are a sort of learned men who have spent most of their time, and pains upon *Languages* and *Antiquities* (things in their kind very good and useful) others whose chief employment hath been *School-Divinity*, and the spinosities of controversie: and these of each kind, generally get great fame for learning. But then, perhaps, they do not exercise themselves in Preaching, which is a faculty very distinct from those studies, and requires proper helps and indeavours, and therefore it happens, when such

Preach

Preach, that their Sermons are dry and harsh, favouring of the crabbedness of their studies and having little of the genius of moral and practical Divinity: This I know is the case of some, I say not of all the learned men of those sorts. And this I think is the occasion of the observation. But then there is another sort of learned men, whose design hath been to study things, to furnish their minds with clear and right conceptions, to make observations on human nature, the manners and actions of men, to turn their thoughts, after due preparations, towards practical Theology, to take parochial charges, and to exercise themselves in frequent
Preaching:

Preaching: And these are by their learning and knowledge inabled to speak with the most judgment, propriety and plainness. For (as I intimated before) it requires parts and understanding to be plain. He must think distinctly and clearly that would teach so: and the true useful learning is the proper instrument to inable a man for that.

D. But if so much knowledg and understanding is necessary to the constituting a true and plain Preacher, methinks we should not have so *many* in that business: for the maintenance of Ministers is in most places so small, that it will not afford encouragement for such men; and others

others that are unqualified disparage the profession, and do mischief to the publick.

A. If I should speak to the thing it self, I should say, that as the maintenance for Ministers, and the consequents are, possibly a much less number of Preachers might suffice; But our circumstances must be considered: The common people count almost nothing else Service, and discharge of duty in supply of a Cure, but Preaching: and the Dissenters carry all by *that*, so that as our affairs are, *general indifferent* Preaching may be more expedient, than much better, when more *limited* and *restrained*. But as to this, the Governours of the Church are the

the best Judges of what is fit, and we are to acquiesce in what they ordain.

C. I think that neither they, nor we need make so much ado about it, for Preaching is no part of *Divine Worship*.

A. I believe you are out in that, for pray what do you call *Divine Worship*?

C. *Prayer, and Thanksgiving, and Sacramental Communion.*

A. You name me some of the parts of *Worship*, but what is the general nature, and notion of it? Is it not the solemn acknowledging and honouring of God, in the ways he hath appointed?

C. Well! and what then?

A. Then! it follows that
Preaching

Preaching is Worship, and so is hearing. For Preaching is publishing Gods mind and will, that the people may know his truth, and obey his laws: and are not his Wisdom, Holiness and Legislative Authority thereby glorified? If they are not known, how shall they be believ'd? if not believ'd how can they be honoured? and how can they be either known or believ'd without being publisht? how can *they believe on him of whom they have not heard, and how can they hear without a Preacher?* Rom. 10. 14. This is part of his Homage and Worship, he is sent to *Preach* the Gospel. And *Publick Hearing* Gods word preacht, is part of the peoples Worship,

Worship, since thereby we solemnly acknowledge, that he is our Lord, and that we desire to know how we may acceptably serve him: That he is our teacher, and we are willing to be instructed by his word declared and explained by his messengers: That in him is our supream happiness, and that we are desirous to know how we may enjoy him; and all this is doing solemn honour to God our maker, and why this should be denyed to be Worship, I cannot tell.

C. This I have often heard; as I suppose you have also.

A. It is true, but we should not receive every bold saying to the prejudice of our duty.

There

There are many such that pass for current among those that are willing to entertain them, that would not bear the tryal; and we ought to examine the things we hear before we admit them.

C. I shall not differ from you in that. But pray don't you think that *Catechising* is better and more useful than so much *Preaching*?

A. Such comparisons are odious. One duty should not be commended to the disparagement of another; each ought to have its place. And indeed *Catechising* is a sort of *Preaching*; it is but another way of teaching the principles of Christian Religion; and is no doubt very useful, and much needed:

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so that the Pulpit-Preaching should not exclude this, both because the Church hath required it, and because that will enter and make impression one way, that will not another. And Catechising hath been used in the best ages of the Church with very good success. This you know our Minister doth perform one season of the Year; till all the youth is gone over that he can get to that exercise: and during all that time he Preacheth also in the afternoon upon some Catechistical head, in order for the instruction of the Men and Women, as well as Children. So that as Preaching doth not exclude Catechising, neither doth Catechising exclude that.

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is double labour I confess for the Preacher so to do, but the People (at least in great Towns) will not be contented without the afternoon Sermon, and a Minister cannot do his duty to the Church, and his charge, without the other, in fit times. On this occasion I must take notice to you, that generally the people are very cold, negligent, and wanting to their children in this matter, in that they do not duly catechise them at home, and do their parts for the instructing them in the principles of Religion; without something of this kind, what is done in publick will not signify much: And 'tis through the want of domestick instructi-

on, that people grow up so much in ignorance, and are thereby so apt to be blown about by every wind of vain doctrine; and to be drawn away from the Church by every pretender that whistles them either to the Church of Rome, on the one hand, or the Sects on the other.

C. But Catechising you say is Preaching, and what! would you have private men Preach?

A. Yes, every private Christian may and ought to Preach in this sence. Every such is a Priest to his own family, that is, it is his duty to teach them the great things of Religion, according to the best of his skill, and knowledg. This is one way

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way to provide for our families, and 'tis the most necessary. Men had better neglect the getting their Children and Servants Bread and Cloaths, than to omit the care about this greater and more needed provision. 'Tis noted to the honour of the holy Patriarch, That he would *teach his Children.* Timothy was taught the Scriptures from a youth, and all Parents are required to bring up their Children in the *nurture and admonition of the Lord.* Were not this duty so much neglected, Ministers would find their people more teachable, and less incapable of the greater and stronger truths that they yet know not; more tenacious of,

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and

and better settled in those that they know already, and more able to shame, and to resist the attempts of Gain-sayers.

Among all the Preaching we have, this is very much needed, and the great defect that is the occasion of most of our Church-maladies lyes here. We are very apt to catch at any thing that may fasten a blame on our Ministers, when there is the least shew of neglect on their parts; I wish we could be sensible of, and reform this great one of our own.

C. But what think you of the *Homilies*? Are not they very useful, and fit to be read in Churches, instead of so much other Preaching? For my

my part I should like that.

A. The *Homilies* contain very good, pious, and wholsom instructions and doctrines; and in due place and time may be used with great profit and advantage. But I suppose you do not pretend to have them in to exclude all *other Preaching*; For that would render the abilities of learned Ministers (as to this part of their office) useless. There are many occasions which those discourses make no provision for; and by such a practice the people in all likelihood would be very much discontented, if not inflamed. I suppose therefore you mean not that the *Homilies* should thrust out all *other Preaching*, but that in some

H 4 . . . places,

places and times, they might be profitably used.

C. No, I think it would be well if they were generally enjoyn'd; and such others added to them as should be thought seasonable, and fit.

A. I have as great a reverence for that Book as you, and as great a sense of the inconveniences that arise from the defects of many Preachers. But we must not always judge of things, as they are nakedly in their natures, but circumstances must be weigh'd. Publick Governours are not only to consider the goodness, but *expediency*; and in reference to a due judgment in that, many extrinsecal matters are to be taken into the account.

•

account. Now as our case is we have (blessed be God) plenty of learn'd and most excellent Preachers (as many I believe as any Age or Nation ever had) Those have bestowed much time, pains, and cost for the furnishing themselves with abilities for the Pulpit; and after all, to suppress their excellent, and useful labours, and to set them upon the same level with those that can but read, would be a great discouragement to them, and loss to the Church: it would dishearten and divert young Students in the Universities, be a great damp upon learning, and in all likelihood, destroy the glory of those venerable Fountains of Piety and Literature:

Besides which, the People you know are so prejudiced, that it would possess them with rage against their Governours, and contempt of their Ministers, fill the Conventicles, and 'tis to be fear'd, make our breaches and divisions incurable. So that certainly you are not in earnest in this, or if you are, I suppose there are but very few of your mind. I have heard some talk indeed that they thought it might do well, if only some select men in every Diocels (and those to be seated in the most eminent places) should be allow'd to Preach; and the same enjoyned to make every year so many Sermons to be deliver'd to the Bishop, as in the whole

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whole should come to fifty two : besides some for the anniversary dayes ; that a Volume of those Sermons should be printed yearly. That each Minister of those not licensed to Preach their own, should have a Copy, and no more be printed than would suffice for *them* : That they should read, or recite one of these by heart, every Sunday, till they should arrive to such Age and Ability, as to be thought fit to be intrusted with the instructing the people with their own Sermons. What this would do, and how practicable it is, I shall not pretend to determine : It looks I confess plausibly enough. But I am no proposer of new projects ;
these

these matters must be left to our Governours; and I mention this only by the by.

C. You are resolv'd to have your own opinion in all things we have talked on; and you shall for me. But notwithstanding all you have said, I shall not be persuaded to have so good an opinion of Preaching, as you seem to have, till I have reason to think that the Preachers believe their own Doctrines.

A. By that you seem to intimate that you think they do not: A very hard thought, that should not be entertain'd lightly. What any man believes we cannot tell, but by his professions: and the Clergy make zealous and earnest profession
of

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of the Christian truths; and therefore 'tis great injultice, and uncharitableness to judge otherwise of them, except upon clear evidence. *Charity thinketh no evil*, it makes the best and most candid interpretations of things, that are capable of wrong construction: But to judg and surmise evil where there is no appearance of it, this is to exercise a lawless and brutish force upon the names of men, and to *rejoyce in iniquity*, as the Apostle speaks, 1 Cor. 1. 13. No ones reputation can be safe from any aspersions, if men may take this lewd liberty of fastening the worst they can phancy on them; so that except you can make out what you say
(which

(which I am sure you cannot) you manifestly incurr the guilt of being an accuser of the Brethren. To asperse any private Christian in this manner, is a great sin; how much more is it so to slander an whole order of publick persons, that bear a Sacred Character. For you do not only injure them in their persons, but mischief others by it, whom by such reproaches you prejudice against them, and so hinder the good that otherwise they might do by their labours: On which account the reputation of Ministers is and ought to be dear to those that are truly honest and conscientious: and where men love to pickeer, and to find faults with Ministers;

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Ministers ; 'tis a plain case that they have some corrupt byas that sways them in those Cen-
sures.

C. For my part I thank God I have none. But by their *fruits* ye shall know them : Their actions preach contrary to their Sermons, and are too plain indications of the little serious credit they give their own doctrines and instructions.

A. I hope you do not think that I would patronize any mens vices or miscarriages : There are too many in all sorts, and where they are in those of the sacred function they are worst ; among whom I cannot deny but there are ill practices ; they are subject to the follies
and

and passions of other men. But then I must tell you too, that were they Angels in their conversation, they would be blackened and made vile. For pray consider how many enemies they have on all sides, that watch for their haltings, and are ready to triumph in any opportunity to expose them. Many hate them for their Function, more for their Conformity: The Romanists on the one hand, and the Sects on the other; Those that have plunder'd the Church, and those that desire to do it; those that have devour'd, and those that take lickerish notice that they have a morsel left. These generally are glad of any falling in a conforming Minister; they

they lye at catch for such, and when they have got a story, they blow it about with wondrous diligence : So that where there is a small miscarriage they will aggravate it, till they have made it a great wickedness ; and when 'tis an heinous offence ; they will impute it to the whole Order. And which is worse, there are many wicked lewd slanderers ready to asperse the clearest innocence ; and some that make it their business in their debauches to contrive ignominious Tales of Clergy-men, which their Enemies are willing to believe, or at least to propagate, though they do not. Wherefore considering these, and such like unhappy circumstances,

stances, 'tis no wonder if the present Clergy suffer much in their names on this score.

C. But what then, are all the things we heard of lewd and debauched Clergy-men false, do you think? and are there not many such vile Persons in Holy Orders?

A. I tell you I acknowledge, and lament that there are so many unworthy persons crept in among the Clergy; and I wish with all my Soul there could be a remedy found for it. But will you consider how most of them get in; you know most of the livings of *England* are in Lay-Patronage, and you cannot be ignorant what unworthy ways are now frequently

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ly taken in the disposal of them :
what Bonds, Contracts and
Terms are required, which
honest, worthy and ingenious
men will not comply with, but
those of no worth or conscience
accept. They bring their
Presentations to the Bishops,
and are able to give an account
of their learning, as far as the
Law requires (which I have
heard is much less than will
render a man able and sufficient
according to the expectation of
our days) They bring us also a
formal Testimonial from those
that likely know little of them,
and the Bishop knows nothing
at all of what they are, less of
what they are like to prove :
But being so qualified, Institu-
tion

tion and Induction, cannot be denied by the Law. They get into a cure, and misbehave themselves in it; and then the blame shall lie on the Bishop, and the disgrace spread upon the whole Clergy. And generally I observe that those who so infamously, and dishonestly dispose of the livings in their gift, and by so doing fill the Church with unworthy and incompetent persons, are the same that clamour about the ill lives of the Clergy, most.

C. But should not these abuses be rectified?

A. I think some good Laws may be wanted to do this: and let me tell you, those that complain might contribute to the reforming

reforming of the miscarriages.

C. How so?

A. By complaining where, and as they ought: As to inform the Bishop when they understand of any Simonaical contracts; to tell the Minister his fault when they know him peccant, and if after that he persist in his vice, to make publick complaint to the Diocesan, that his reformation may be attempted by the Censures of the Church; or that upon his contumacious persistence, he may be cast out. If this course was faithfully taken, the evils would be in great part cured. But the misery on't is, many that clamor do not desire *that*, but are rather glad of an opportunity to asperse

asperse, and vilifie the Clergy; and therefore they complain for mischief, not for remedy.

C. It may be so with some, but I assure you 'tis not so with me. But I think now we have talkt enough of this subject.

A. I think so too; and 'tis time for me to be going homewards.

D. Pray let me say somewhat to you first.

A. I wonder you have been silent so long, what is it?

D. Is it! It is to tell you that you have been very bitter in your Censures of those godly Ministers, whose Consciences will not give them leave to conform. And after all you have, or can say, I must tell you they are very *powerful* Preachers, and prevail

prevail so much, not for I know not what phancies of yours, but because they *Preach Christ*, and *cry down Sin*, which very few of your National Preachers do.

A. I did not consider that you were so near, else perhaps I might have dealt more gently with your Friends. In what I have said I have spoke plainly as I thought, and as I doubt not, the matter clearly is, as all understanding unprejudiced men, who have been acquainted with their ways, may see; so that you do me wrong to accuse me of bitterness, as if I had aggravated things beyond the just and due representation of them, which I assure you was all I intended.

They are *Powerful* indeed to
move

move the affections that Ignorance and Enthusiasm, Pride, Singularity and Faction have begot: Those they stir by the same ways by which they were produced; they are powerful on the affections of the senseless inconsidering vulgar, which are mightily transported by blustering and noise, as the waters are by a Storm, when as soon as the violence is over, they are still as before: But I do not find that they generally move the intelligent and judicious, otherwise, than to beget in them scorn of their egregious follies, and pitty of their fond admirers.

But they Preach Jesus Christ you say, which others you think

do

do not : and 'tis true they have the name of Christ almost ever in their mouths, and talk as men transported with the beauties and excellencies of the Lord *Jesus* : This others do not so much, and therefore Preach not Christ, you phancy ; by which you shew how little you understand what you say, notwithstanding you live under their powerful Preaching. For to Preach Christ is to declare and press his Doctrines, Laws, Example, and Sanctions, which I am sure our Ministers (those of them I hear) constantly and earnestly do : and not to doat upon, and to be always impertinently and fulsomly repeating of his name. I cannot deny

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indeed

indeed but that your men also profess his Doctrins and Laws; but yet 'tis the opinion of some, that many of those Preachers have so darkned these by their phrases, and so corrupted them by their false and fanatical conceits, that their Gospel is quite another thing from the Primitive, Apostolical Christianity; and if so, they Preach not *Christ*, but their own *dreams*. But that is too large a subject for us to discourse now. That I may obtain your favour, I will allow they Preach *Christ* (I wish some do it not out of *Strife* and *Envy*) yet certainly they are not the *only* men that do it, nor is that fit to be a mark of distinction between them, and our Ministers.

O but

O but they *Preach down Sin*, you tell us ; and that's powerful Preaching, and by that they affect the hearts and consciences of their hearers. And 'tis true those Teachers cry out against sin in the *general*, with a great deal of earnestness, declaring what a vile and odious thing sin is, with wondrous zeal (I cannot say with so much sence and judgment) but then, they seldom descend to particulars, except in declaiming against the noted sins of others, and such as they take their Governours in Church and State, and those of opposite judgment to them, to be guilty of : So that their common places of invective, are *Idolatry, Will-worship, Superstition,*

Humane Inventions, Formality, Persecution, hatred of the Godly, and such like (things of which themselves are as guilty as any sort of men in the world, though they think not so) But for the sins with which they are generally, and plainly chargeable (those I mention'd before) Malice, Deceit, Disobedience, Pride, Covetousness, Backbiting, Rebellion, Schism, Sacrilege, and other such, we seldom hear them declaim against those. I do not remember that in ten years, in which I was capable of observing in the late times, that I ever heard one Sermon from any of them, upon either of those subjects.

D. You may talk what you please,

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please, but for my part, I shall hear those men, because I find I *profit* by them, and I cannot by your Parish Minister.

A. That is the continual pretence for leaving our Churches, when people have nothing else to say. Pray therefore let you and I debate this matter a little.

You don't profit by our own Minister:

You do by those other Teachers.

As to the *first*, let me ask you, whose fault is it that you do not profit? Doth not our Minister Preach the great Truths, and Duties of the Christian Religion? Don't you observe that he picks out the most suitable, useful and awakening Subjects? Doth he not represent the Doctrines with plainness and di-

strictness? Doth he not press the duties with earnestness and affection, doth he not lay down the great motives and encouragements, and give us the true practicable directions to guide us in the performance? (You have heard him often) what say you, can you deny any of this?

D. I have no great fault I confess to find with the mans Preaching, but yet methinks I am not so much affected with it, nor can I profit by it.

A. It seems you do not profit, but you cannot tell why; therefore give me leave to tell you the reason. First, you have no kindness for the Ministers person, because he conforms, and
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it may be, is not in all things of the same opinion with the men you admire.

D. Now you mind me of it, I must tell you he is not *Orthodox*, nor sound in his judgment, and that I confess doth beget in me some dislike of him.

A. *Orthodox* is a word by which your men mean one of their own opinions; and of these they are very fond, and in doating on uncertain points that appertain not to the foundation, they shew themselves very superstitious, and lay ground for eternal Schism, and even for Scepticism, and Atheism itself. For when disputed things are adhered to as certain and necessary, Christian Charity will

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be destroyed, and all things at last disputed.

But pray what do you make the measure of Orthodoxy? Are not the belief of and adherence to the Scriptures, the first Fathers and Councils, the old Creeds, and the Articles of the Church of *England* (which in the Doctrines your men pretend to allow) are not these enough to intitle a man Orthodox? and all these our Minister teacheth, and professeth.

D. But doth he not hold some opinions that are contrary to those grounds of belief?

A. I do not think he doth, and I dare say he thinks he doth not. In extra-essential matters the Pious and the Learned of all sorts

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sorts have ever been of different judgments, and are like so to continue to the worlds end. I have in my time, convers't with men of all persuasions, and yet scarce ever met any two (though of the same general way and Communion, that were in all things of the same mind: And therefore if our Minister judgeth otherwise than you or I, or this or that Divine, in some out-points of Theology, it is but as every *thinking* man else doth: and we that hear him constantly know, that he generally Preacheth the great acknowledg'd Truths, and never troubles his hearers with private opinions: But zealously and frequently reprove those that disturb the

I 5 world,

world with their particular phancies, and declares continually against meddling in the Pulpit with unnecessary controversies and notions; so that if it were so, that he had private opinions, you and I need not be concern'd about them.

D. Well! but I have heard him Preach Doctrines I did not like.

A. That may be: But I hope you do not take your liking or disliking to be the standard of Doctrines fit to be Preach'd or not.

D. Nay, I mean Doctrines that were *Erroneous*, which was one reason I left his Ministry.

A. *Erroneous*! as you thought: you would have your judgment to be the measure of truth and falsehood.

falsehood. Do you not think you are in some things mistaken?

D. I know I am fallible.

A. And do actually err in many things?

C. It may be so.

A. And yet you stick to all your opinions with that stiffness as if you were infallible: and condemn every one for erroneous that in the least differs from you. This let me tell you, is great pride and immodesty, and renders people very unteachable, when they will not receive or bear any thing but what is just according to their own phancy, and preconceiv'd opinion; nor be taught to understand any thing better than they do already, as if their
knowledg

knowledg was perfect, and their minds had no need of information; when as most commonly such presumptuous persons are very ignorant, and the knowledg they pretend, is but a confused heap of vain imaginations, which they pickt up by chance, and have no truth or coherence in them.

D. Every man must judg by the best understanding he hath, and so did I, when I judg'd your Minister to Preach Erroneous Doctrine.

A. And that you say was one reason of your withdrawing from him?

D. Yes.

A. But did you ever go to him to discourse the matter with

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with him? Perhaps you mistook his meaning; or it may be he might have made it appear that he was in the right, and you in the wrong.

D. I did not trouble my self to do that.

A. And yet you withdrew from his Ministry upon it?

D. I did.

A. Then let me tell you, you did a very rash, uncharitable, unchristian action. We are not, you know, to separate from the conversation of any private person till we have told him his fault between us and him, though the fault be plain and apparent: much less may we divide from the Church and our Ministers, till we have made the

the matter of offence known; much less may we do it when the fault is not evident, and certain. It is no small matter to change the Guide that Gods providence, and our Governours have set over us, and to take others contrary to the Laws under which we live; 'tis a thing that before a man doth it he should consider well, for here is at least the *appearance* of danger. 'Tis *something* to break Laws and disturb Governors, and trouble Ministers, and offend private Christians; 'tis *something*, I say, which a tender Conscience would not do, without great consideration, and without being fully resolv'd in the necessity of it: and how
then

then durst you do it, upon a mislike of your Ministers Doctrine, when you never did your self or him that right, as to speak with him about it? and to enquire what satisfaction he could give you in it. This let me tell you plainly, is an error greater than any you can pretend in his Doctrines, it is a sin that hath a complication of many others, *Pride* and *Stomach*, *Self-will*, *Contempt* of your betters, and causeless *Disobedience* to your Governors. You have now chosen ways and teachers upon your own head, and if you happen to be mistaken in your choice (as I much fear you are) this confident proceeding and bold relying on your own understanding,

ding, will render your sin and folly inexcusable.

D. I perceive you grow angry. Fare you well.

A. Nay, pray stay a little, I am not so much angry as griev'd at your ways: and have a question more to ask you on occasion of what you have told me; and that is, Whether you are to leave every Minister and Church, as soon as any thing is said that is really erroneous, in the lesser and unessential matters?

D. Should we not love the truth and fly from errors? I think we ought to settle where the greatest purity is both in Doctrine and Worship.

A. And upon these terms we shall

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shall never settle any where at all. For no Church pretends itself to be infallible, but the *Roman*: and there are no particular men or body of men, but have their actual errors and mistakes. So that according to this way of proceeding you must have departed from the Preaching and Communion of the holiest Men, and best Churches of the most ancient, yea and of all times. In many things we *err*, as well as *offend* all.

I have thus spoken to you freely in this matter, I hope you will consider it. But I have a little more to say of your *not profiting* under our Minister: I am yet speaking to the *first* cause,

cause, your prejudice against his person, which in a manner you confess : Where this is, the Doctrine will not be heeded, be it what it will ; and I have plainly observed this effect in you, when I have seen you at Church sometimes at Funeral Sermons, or other occasions.

D. What have you observed ?

A. I have taken notice, that though the Minister hath been speaking of the greatest matters, in the most pathetical and moving way, yet you have looked coldly, insensibly, and unconcernedly upon it : whereas I remember when the men you now follow, preached in publick, you used to listen with

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his a very visible and affectionate
ou attention to all, even the poor,
Do mean, impertinent, and some-
e it times senseless things, they de-
in- liver'd; and to be very diligent
ou, in penning those Sermons;
ch when as these you manifestly
ns, slight by your carriage, even
b- when they are full of the
weightiest, and most useful
truths? And is not this to have
at the Faith of Christ with *respect of*
en persons? And to come under
rs, St. Judes Character of the Sepa-
ad ratists of his time, who had
ve mens persons in admiration? This
d is not to honour Ministers for
e- their works sake, but to under-
n value and slight their work for
n theirs; whereas a Christian
h should joyfully hear Christs
a Truths

Truths and Laws, and affectionately imbrace them for their own sake, and his.

D. This I do for all your observations, and so I hope you have done with me.

A. No, I have more causes yet to shew of your *not profiting* under our Minister: you told me he delivered Doctrines sometimes that you did not like: He presseth the duties of *Peaceableness, Modesty of judgment, Candor, Subjection to Governors, Charity, &c.* And reproves the contrary vices, and these are very proper, and seasonable subjects for the needs of the Age: But such Doctrines you do not like, your party is wont to call the most modest and

and necessary representation of these matters, railing, and reflecting on the godly. So that those duties, and their contrary sins must not be toucht lest you wound the good People. No; Preach up the comfortable Doctrines of Gods seeing no sin in his chosen, Salvation by Faith without Works, and the Righteousness of Christ covering our Sins, (in the Antinomian sence) Liberty of Conscience, the Privileges of the Saints, the marks of Regeneration that comprehend the Party, and exclude all else: the abominations of the Wicked, that are for the Common-Prayer, and Bishops. O these are edifying, Soul-refreshing Doctrines, these you like, because they flatter you

you in your ways: Those that
Preach thus, shall have your
Company, your Ears, your
Hearts, and your Purles; when
as such as Preach the sound
searching Doctrine, you cannot
endure: you vilifie their per-
sons, and are prejudiced against
their Preaching, and be it never
so powerful and profitable, you
can learn nothing from it, because
you *will not*. Here's the bottom
of your phancied profiting by
your own Preachers, and not by
ours. But if a man should ask
you in what principles of Reli-
gion you are better instructed
what duties you are excited to
and directed in, that you could
not learn from our Ministers
I believe you would be able to
give

give but a slender account of your profiting in those things, in which the true proficiency of a Christian doth consist. But your profiting is your being gratified, pleased, and encouraged in the way of opposition, and separation you are in.

D. I cannot endure to hear your wicked and prophane discourse, and therefore once more, fare you well.

A. I know every thing is prophane in your account that doth not favour your Phantastical and Schismatical ways. If you are angry at my honest freedom I must bear it as well as I can, and so, Your Servant.

E. He'l do your errand to the Brotherhood, and publish you

you for a very carnal wicked man.

A. That's their usual way of answering when they are roundly opposed, and of reforming when they are seriously reprov'd. I value the favour of any wise and good man, but for theirs I heed it not.

E. He speaks bitterly against our Ministers, when he is in company where he can talk at liberty. His common accusation of them is that they Preach for *hire*.

A. It is fit that he that Preacheth the Gospel should live by it. And the Justice and Piety of our Ancestors have made some provision for them in most places, settled by our most

most Fundamental Laws; and what they have out of any mans Estate on that account, is as much *theirs*, as the remaining part is *his*. Here is the mistake of men that talk thus, They reckon that all they possess is their own, in which account they are much out: all is their own when their debts are paid; when they have paid to God the *things that are Gods*, and to *Cesar* the *things that are Cesars*; what the Laws have ordained to be paid out of their Estates to others, is *their* property, and no man can be called an hireling for taking what is his own: Nor can Ministers be any more justly called so for receiving the maintenance the ancient Laws

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and

and Government have allowed them, than Kings for taking Taxes, and other payments from their Subjects.

E. Ministers have much to do with such people : and many that in words pretend they love the Church are as troublesome as those. Such as neglect the publick worship, and never come to it, but when they have nothing else to do ; now and then you shall see them drop into the Church by chance, but in their very coming in they shew how little concerned they are, and their whole carriage after declares their carelessness, and indifferency to those things. So that if the Minister particularly court and caress them with-

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without taking notice of their indevotion, and other sins, he may chance to have their good word a little while: but if he do not so, they be ready on all occasions, and without any, to carp at him; if he omits any of the least circumstances of his duty (or they phancy so) he shall be sure to hear of their railing, and backbiting of him; when as the most constant, laborious, and worthy diligence in the work of his Ministry, and the most laudable performance of all offices publick and private, shall not gain him any jot of interest or favour with them, nor as much as their good word. The ground of which is because the things he admini-

nisters to them are not at all valued, and have no hold upon their affections.

A. Perhaps they may like to hear him Preach a little, while he is new among them: but when he hath resided any time, he grows stale, and cannot affect them with his Preaching, though constant exercise hath never so much improved him in that faculty.

E. And 'tis another discouragement to learned and able Ministers that after all their teaching, people have so little sense and understanding of Divine matters, as to be most of all taken with the weakest, and most trifling of those men, that now and then happen to supply their

their room. I have heard some of them say that they are extremely glad when their Auditors happen to be pleased with any true and substantial Preacher; but to hear of their admiring and applauding those that they, and other judicious men, were ashamed to hear; this shews their little proficiency, and cannot but be matter of trouble to their Ministers.

A. And no doubt it is so; not out of envy to those poor retailers of small wares; but of pity to their follies, and the Peoples want of understanding and judgment; it would trouble any man to see that he hath so far lost his labour, in all his diligent endeavours to instruct

them; to find that they generally feel not any thing of substantial, practical, awakening truth, but will sit stupid, and dead under such; when they are pleased, and transported with weak, affected, superficial stuff, that hath no sence, understanding, or life in it. But it grows late we may have some other opportunity to discourse these matters.

E. Pray before we part let me have a word or two more with you. You have been asserting and commending *Plain Preaching*, and you seem to make *Plainness* the general Character of all good Sermons, But will not this disoblige the Ministers from taking pains about them?

would

would it not expose their Preaching to the disrespect, if not contempt of the People? Will they not think they can Preach themselves, if it be so plain a business? And will not the Ministerial office be hereby render'd liable to be usurp'd by every one that judgeth he has abilities for plain instruction?

A. I perceive you have not taken sufficient notice of what has been said in describing plain Preaching; I do not mean by it, what is slight and vulgar, what is unthought, unconsider'd; but what is unstrain'd, unaffected; what is manly, and solid; and so to speak requires learning and study, and improved faculties. This should be the end of

a wise mans pains to conceive things clearly, and to express them plainly. It asks much less of parts and abilities to talk mystically in phrases, and hard words, and terms of art (which many admire, because they do not understand) than it doth to speak properly, and intelligibly; which, though it may seem very easie to be done, yet indeed it requires most labour, and 'tis mastery to have gain'd this ability. A man doth not shew his wit or learning, by rolling in metaphors, and scattering his sentences of Greek and Latin, by abounding in high expressions, and talking in the clouds, but he is then learned, when his learning has clear'd

clear'd his understanding, and furnish'd it with full and distinct apprehensions of things; when it enables him to make *hard things plain*; and conceptions, *that were confused, distinct, and orderly*; and he shews his learning by speaking good, strong, and plain sense. So that you see there is no fear of making Learning unnecessary to good Preaching; there is no fear of excusing Ministers from taking pains; there is no fear of exposing the office by the plainness I have commended: and for your objection that this will lay it open to intrusions, besides the answer contain'd in what I have said already, I say further, that the Ministers function is, blessed be God, secured from
such

such invasions by the discipline, order, and government of the Church according to the primitive Apostolical pattern, and rules, and not by the Clergies having the only abilities to instruct; I doubt not but there are many pious and knowing Laymen, whose parts and knowledge would enable them for publick teaching: but they have no Authority to do; and therefore 'twould be a great sin, and folly for them to attempt it. Every man may not do every thing that he can; there is a *politick* as well as *natural* capacity; the Laws of Government are to be consider'd, and observ'd, and according to them, the abilities of men ought to be imployed, or restrain'd.

E. You

concerning **Preaching.** 111

E. You have satisfied me as to that matter, but your plain Preachers do not take so much pains as exact Preaching would require; for I understand that some of them Preach *Extempore*.

A. I know indeed some that Preach *without writing*; but their Preaching is not therefore *Extempore*; *Extempore* is *unthought*, not *unwritten*: and these do not vent unconsider'd, unpremeditated instructions. No, those I plead for prepare themselves by previous studies of the Sciences, and Divinity; after which with much anxiety and thoughtfulness, they settle clear, and coherent conceptions in their minds, of the Christian doctrines, encouragements, and rules of life; they have exercised themselves
long

long in laborious Preaching and it may be thence have gain'd the ability of ready, and easie expression; they frame the scheme of every particular Sermon, and lodge it distinctly in their minds; yea they lay the train of the whole inlargement and settle the consequence of each thing to another, under every head; though they give themselves not the trouble of writing and forming all into set words. And if any will condemn this for *Extempore* Preaching, think they are very unjust in their Censure.

E. If it be so, I shall not make one of those Censurers; nor at present give you further Diversion from your occasions.

A. Therefore, Good Night.

FINIS.

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NOTA FOR OLYON

11:25
11:30
11:35
11:40
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12:00